

Hon Bill English

Acting Prime Minister

Hon Tariana Turia

Minister Responsible for Whanau Ora



Embargoed until 2pm

8 April 2010

**Media
Statement**

Government welcomes Whanau Ora report

The Government has welcomed the release today of the Whanau Ora Taskforce Report, which sets out options for improving social, education and other support services for families across New Zealand.

“Whanau Ora is one of a number of Government initiatives to help families become more self-managing and take responsibility for their own development,” Acting Prime Minister Bill English and Minister Responsible for Whanau Ora Tariana Turia say.

The Government will formally respond to the Taskforce Report in the next month or so. But Mr English and Mrs Turia made it clear today that while Whanau Ora has the potential to benefit Maori, it will be available to all families in need.

They also confirmed a governance group – including three members of the Whanau Ora Taskforce and three government agency chief executives – has been appointed to manage the programme. It will report to Mrs Turia as Minister Responsible for Whanau Ora. The group is:

- Rob Cooper (chair) is the chief executive of the Ngati Hine Health Trust, a Maori-owned provider of social services in Northland.
- Professor Sir Mason Durie was chair of the Whanau Ora Taskforce, is Deputy Vice-Chancellor at Massey University and Professor of Maori Research and Development.
- Nancy Tuaine of Te Atihaunui a Paparangi (Whanganui) is the manager of the Whanganui River Trust Board and a member of the Whanganui District Health Board.

- Leith Comer, chief executive Te Puni Kokiri
- Peter Hughes, chief executive Ministry of Social development
- Stephen McKernan, director-general, Ministry of Health.

Mr English says it is clear from results in recent years that traditional approaches to helping families in need have not worked that well - and taxpayers are not getting the best value for money.

“We believe there is a better, more effective way of using the many hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars already spent in this area. Whanau Ora will also deliver better results for the families themselves. It recognises the importance of the family and the things that make families special.

“It’s also based on the idea that, with a little help, people are capable of sorting out their own lives – so surely it’s within our grasp as a Government to recognise that and to organise our own services around whanau and family.”

Ministers have agreed that Whanau Ora will be financially neutral – funded by reprioritising existing funding in votes Health, Social Development and Maori Affairs. Those details will be set out in the Budget.

“Rather than having different agencies working with individual family members, Whanau Ora will work with whanau and families as a whole,” Mrs Turia says.

“It will empower them to take control by meeting their obligations and taking responsibility.

“By building on the strengths of the entire whanau, it will require agencies to work together in better and smarter ways to support whanau and families.

“I am confident that Whanau Ora has the potential to help all families, right across New Zealand,” Mrs Turia says.

**Media contacts: Craig Howie (Minister English) 027 755 5809
Lisa Mulitalo (Minister Turia) 021 220 0886**

HOW WHANAU ORA CAN HELP FAMILIES

In this example the mother is a sole parent who is in part-time/casual employment. She received additional social assistance to supplement her income, but finds it very hard to make ends meet. She moved away from her whanau during her teens and has had very little contact with them since.

She has three children:

- Her 16-year old son has repeatedly been caught driving without a licence. He worked for five months as a builder's labourer, but stopped going to work three weeks ago because he did not want his employer to know that he did not have a licence and had been to court for these offences.
- Her 12-year old daughter has just been referred to Strengthening Families as a result of repeated school absence.
- Her eight-year old son is repeatedly noted by the Police for roaming the streets late at night. Often when Police return him home, there is no adult present. This has led to a notification to Child Youth and Family.

This whanau has lived in a Housing New Zealand Corporation home for the past 11 years. In recent time, the neighbourhood has become unsafe, with increased youth gang activity.

The mother is continually focused on trying to provide for her whanau – often working late into the evening or morning, leaving the children unsupervised. She relied on the 16-year old to get the younger ones off to school. If the older boy goes to work, the 12 and eight-year olds get themselves off to school.

The mother doesn't know that because the 12-year old is being bullied on the way to school and she often does not get to school. This has led to the Strengthening Families referral.

Quite often, when the mother is working late, the eight-year old wanders from the house. He has begun hanging out with the local youth gang for companionship, hence the Police intervention.

The mother is so focused on providing a living for her family that she has neglected her own health. She does not have a regular doctor and has never had a breast or cervical screen.

In this scenario, the family is currently involved with:

- New Zealand Police
- Work and Income
- Child, Youth and Family
- Schools
- Strengthening Families

Each intervention is focused on an individual family member: unlicensed driver, truant child or unsupervised child. All interventions are happening in isolation of each other and none focuses on the whanau as a whole.

Under Whanau Ora, this whanau could be connected with a Whanau Ora Provider at the first instance of need. The referral could come from any agency or from the whanau itself.

The Whanau Ora provider would work with the whanau to build a relationship that opens frank exchanges on the real issues, and top determine possible solutions. These could include:

- Assisting the mother to gain employment that provides more adequately for the whanau and which enables her to be at home to support her children.
- Reconnecting the mother with her whanau so they can help support and care for the children.
- Working with the 16-year old to gain his licence, and support him to explain the situation to his employer so he can return to work.
- Supporting the mother and whanau to establish an effective relationship with the school.
- Identifying the instigators of the bullying and approach their whanau to work through the issues to enable the 12-year old girl to return to school.

The mother being at home more regularly will mean that the eight-year old is better supervised and cared for. Ultimately, this mother is capable of leading change in her whanau. However, her economic realities have prevented her from fulfilling this role.

Whanau Ora would help her work through and resolve these issues and enable her to focus on being a carer and protector.

Ends